



The Desert Marine

Official Command News Report For the 2d Marine Division - Iraq

Oct. 5, 2005

Iron Fist: Hammering away at insurgency in Al Qaim

*Inside:
Remembering Sept. 11
3/25 Corpmen saving lives
3/6 on the ground in Al Qaim
Ramadi; 3/7 Comes under attack*



2d Marine Division -- Operation Iraqi Freedom



2d Marine Division

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COVER PHOTO: CAMPAL QA'IM, Iraq
- Marines from the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment unload seabags and packs from a CH-53 Super Stallion helicopter after arriving in the Al Qa'im area of operations to relieve the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment

Photo by Sgt. Jerad W. Alexander

RCT-2 strikes at insurgent forces with Iron Fist

2d Marine Division Staff Report

CAMPBLUE DIAMOND, ARRAMADI, Iraq—

A force of approximately 1,000 Marines, soldiers and sailors from Regimental Combat Team-2 launched an operation against a known terrorist sanctuary in the western Al Anbar province town of Sa'dah, in the Al Qa'im region approximately 12 km. from the Syrian border. Operation Kabda Bil Hadid (Iron Fist) began in the early morning hours of Oct. 1 with the objectives of rooting out Al Qaeda in Iraq terrorists operating within the area and disrupting insurgent support systems in and around the city.

For the past several months, terrorists within Sa'dah have escalated their intimidation and murder campaign against the local populace and city government officials. The resulting effect was an increased ability to move freely within the area and a base for them to launch attacks against innocent civilians, Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces.

The first day of Kabda Bil Hadid saw several successful engagements against Al Qaeda terrorists. Coalition Forces, including helicopters from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, engaged and killed eight armed terrorists in fighting early in the day.

During another engagement, insurgents drove two vehicles in the vicinity of a Marine position, dismounted and began to attack with small-arms fire. One of the vehicles was found to be rigged with explosives. The gun battle left four terrorists dead. The fifth surrendered to the Marines.

In the late morning, Marines discovered and destroyed a roadside bomb on the outskirts of Sa'dah. Shortly afterwards, a M1A1 Main Battle Tank destroyed a

vehicle car bomb with one round from its main gun southwest of the city. North of Sa'dah, U.S. Forces killed three Al Qaeda in Iraq terrorists after the group attacked their checkpoint with small-arms fire.

The eighth insurgent was killed when an AH-1W Super Cobra helicopter destroyed a vehicle after its driver fired on a Marine position with a rocket-propelled grenade. Another vehicle traveling with the attacker was seen to be carrying additional RPGs and was subsequently destroyed by missile fire from the Cobra. The driver and passenger escaped the blast.

The second day of Kabda Bil Hadid saw numerous terrorists attacking U.S. forces with AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades.

In one incident, at approximately 11:45 a.m., seven insurgents were engaged by Marine

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There has been a substantial increase in the operational tempo in our Area of Operation. We have simultaneous operations in the Western Euphrates River Valley and aggressive interdiction efforts in cities like Ramadi and Fallujah — all to ensure that the citizens of Al Anbar Province have the opportunity to cast their in the Oct. 15 Referendum. On top of the above efforts, Ramadan officially kicked off a few days ago and will last for about a month. So don't expect the pace to slow anytime soon. For those of you who are not aware of Ramadan's significance, it is a period of fasting and spiritual purification and is considered the most sacred holiday in Islam. Because as a Nation we pride ourselves on our religious tolerance as a guiding principle, it is important that we are aware of and maintain respect for the cultural traditions of the Iraqi people during this time. Similarly we must be mindful that Ramadan could mean an increase in enemy activity. The terrorists will likely seek to exploit this occasion to attack coalition forces. The holiday ends with Eid-ul-fitr — a festival marked by celebratory feasts and gift-giving. Marines, sailors and soldiers are encouraged to learn more about Ramadan from their unit chaplain or by visiting the Ramadan Flyer link on the 2nd Marine Division, Al Anbar Iraq, homepage.

You continue to perform a magnificent job. But, as can be expected of Marines, with all the upcoming events, we must intensify our focus so we are prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. Lets all redouble our efforts to accomplish the mission of allowing the citizens of Al Anbar to cast their votes on Oct 15 and Dec 15.

Do not become complacent and continue to look after each other. These next 75 days are the culmination of eight months of hard work and the investment of our fellow brother's lives and blood — don't waste it!

Semper Fidelis,
Col. R. G. Sokoloski
Chief of Staff, 2nd Marine Division

RCT-2 Marines, firefighters remember 9/11

Story by Lance Cpl. Lucian Friel

CAMP RIPPER, ALASAD, Iraq - "We lost 343 firefighters during the attacks of September 11, 2001 and that's a big part of why a lot of us are here," explained Capt. Wayne Morrow, the Al Asad Fire Department station captain.

Marines and sailors of Regimental Combat Team-2 and firefighters with the base fire department gathered for a memorial photograph to show that even though they are deployed to Iraq, they have not forgotten.

A flag dedicated to the memory of the victims of the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City was flown in front of the RCT-2 combat operations center, where the photograph was taken.

The photograph was taken and the flag was flown to remind the Marines and sailors of RCT-2 about a significant event in American history, and why they are currently deployed to Iraq supporting *Operation Iraqi Freedom*.

Sergeant Maj. Thomas G. Reinig, the RCT-2 sergeant major, organized the tribute and summed it up in a speech to his troops.

"This photo took 15 minutes of our time," he said. "It took a lifetime from those who both died and those



Photo by Cpl. Neill A. Sevelius

AL ASAD, Iraq - Marines with Regimental Combat Team 2 and members of the Al Asad Fire Rescue Team stand in front of a World Trade Center memorial flag in remembrance of the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11th, 2001. Marines from Regimental Combat Team 2 conduct counter-insurgency operations with Iraqi Security Forces to isolate and neutralize anti-Iraqi forces, to support the continued development of Iraqi security forces, and to support Iraqi reconstruction and democratic elections in order to create a secure environment that enables Iraqi self reliance and self governance.

who are still alive," he continued, "and ended with a promise to Americans. So from my heart to all Americans I say keep the faith with whatever God you worship, with your country and with each other. We will make you proud of us."

"It was an honor and we are proud to be here with the Marines

supporting them in this fight against terrorism. It was important for us to do this to remember all the firefighters and Americans we lost that day," Morrow explained.

The memorial 9/11 flag was presented to the Marines of RCT-2 by the 9/11 Flags Program, organized to send flags that have

been flown at the World Trade Center attack site, to military units fighting the war on terrorism.

The New York/ New Jersey Port Authority Police Department usually deliver the flags in person to the troops at the receiving unit's location, which was impossible to do this time due to ongoing combat operations.

According to the 9/11 Flags web site, www.911flags.org, the PAPD officers, usually former active duty military veterans, consider it a great honor to deliver these symbols of American freedom and resolve.

They have motivated and inspired the military personnel, reminding the men and women why they are fighting this war and to help keep them focused on the mission at hand.

Marines of RCT-2 will keep a set of memorial flags when they return to the U.S. after their deployment here in the Al Anbar Province.

"To be reminded of what we are doing and why we are doing it out here is important," said Davis. "It's always great when you can get a bunch of Americans together who have the same goal and are going in one direction," Davis explained.

Communication Key for two friends

Story and photo by Lance Cpl. Lucian Friel

CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq - The two Marines with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment fought side by side, taking cover on a little rise that separated the city of Husaybah, Iraq from Syria in April, participating in a fierce firefight with insurgents in April.

Corporals Ryan Fitzgerald and Nathan G. Hart, both 21, are Marines from Windlake, Wis., and despite being thousands of miles from home, they found themselves fighting insurgents together along with elements of Regimental Combat Team-2.

The Marines, sand and sweat on their faces, fought the insurgents off in a barrage of gunfire. They were bonded by more than being Marines



CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq - Corporal Ryan S. Fitzgerald, 21, and Cpl. Nathan G. Hart, 21, made their first deployment to Iraq together and were engaged in a firefight in April. Fitzgerald graduated from Muskego High School in 2002 and Hart graduated a year after he did. The two Marines have gone through their first two years in the Marine Corps together from boot camp until now.

and being from the same small town in Wisconsin. They are classmates, who became "brothers" through a series of strange coincidences.

Fitzgerald and Hart thought about what brought them to that point in Iraq. The two realized the story itself was what they simply called — "pretty amazing."

Fitzgerald, a rugby player, graduated from Muskego High School in 2002 while Hart was beginning his senior year there. Fitzgerald joined the United States Rugby (under-19) team, played in the Under-19 World Cup in March 2003 and continued playing until August that year.

Meanwhile, Hart joined the Marine Corps' delayed entry program in August 2002 and was prepared to go to recruit training after he graduated high school in 2003. He was slated to go August 25.

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Alpha 1/6 HQ Marines keep the line ready to fight

Story and Photo by Cpl. Mike Escobar

SAQLAWIYAH, Iraq – In post-war Iraq, prolonged firefights and urban house-to-house conflict are uncommon. The country's roadways, however, remain perilous as insurgents continue lacing them with homemade roadside bombs to target passing U.S. and Iraqi military convoys.

It's a danger that comes with the territory for Marines like Cpl. Daniel McNeill and his fellow warriors with Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.

Twenty-one-year-old McNeill and 20 other personnel comprise their company's Headquarters Platoon, a contingent of troops whose job skills range from mortar men to radio operators to truck drivers. Together, these Marines and Navy corpsmen support their infantry brethren as they conduct counter-insurgency operations in Saqlawiyah, a farming community on the outskirts of

Fallujah.

"We've done well over 500 convoys during our time (six months) here, during which we've been 'IEDed' three times," said McNeill, referring to insurgent attempts to attack the platoon's supply and logistics convoys using improvised explosive devices. "It happened to us twice while we were on a run to get morning chow." Everyday, these Marines risk their lives as their convoys take them miles away from rural Saqlawiyah to their battalion's headquarters outside Fallujah to pick up food, mail and supplies for their company.

McNeill said providing logistical support is only one of Headquarters Platoon's multiple functions.

"We go on every company-sized operation and every raid the company does," the Marianna,

Fla. native continued. "Not only do we add an extra rifle platoon to the mix, but we provide a detainee handling team, casualty evacuation capabilities, and re-supply runs during certain missions."

While the company conducts operations, they are monitored by their headquarters element.

"It's our job to keep the company COC (combat operations center) running," the 22-year-old

battle, Petty Officer 3rd Class Justin Mannick oversees the company aid station. Inside this makeshift hospital, corpsmen can treat injuries ranging from skin infections and colds to gunshot and shrapnel wounds.

"Marines can come in here any time of day, because this station works as a 24-hour hospital," Mannick explained. "We meet all their basic care needs here. Normally, though, the

corpsmen on the line take care of everything. My docs are on auto-pilot when it comes to taking care of Marines."

Personnel within Headquarters Platoon also keep accountability of the company's troop strength and help process intelligence data gathered by Marines in the field to forward on to higher for further analysis.

Many of the Marines performing the platoon's assorted tasks are mortar men by trade. Though they stay ready to rain



Sacramento, Calif. native continued. "We keep comm up with the battalion, troubleshoot our radios, and assist the watch officer to track patrols that are out. If a squad on patrol is having problems with their comm gear, we'll troubleshoot them via radio."

Communicators like Alvarez also played a pivotal role in helping their company set up their base of operations when they arrived here in April. As the infantrymen filled sandbags and stretched concertina wire to fortify their position, Alvarez laid out wire for communication from various outlying guard observation posts to the base COC. Now, he said, rooftop and perimeter sentry posts are equipped with field telephones directly connected the company's command center.

While the communicators help monitor the

destruction on the enemy from afar, these infantrymen primarily serve as augments for Headquarters Platoon. Their job is to perform general purpose and miscellaneous tasks to keep the company operating smoothly, McNeill explained.

Through their tireless support, this 21-man platoon has played a huge role in enabling Company A's operational success, and will continue to do so during their last several weeks in Iraq, McNeill said.

"We're working hard, just like everyone else here, to keep things running," he added. "If we weren't here, it would be a lot rougher on the line platoons, because they would have more duties to perform and watches to stand. The fact that we're here enables everyone in the company to get a little extra sleep."

3/7 corpsmen go back to basics

Story and photos by Cpl. Shane Suzuki

AR RAMADI, Iraq - On the battlefield, the difference between life and death is often very small. Little things like proper first aid skills and administration of 'buddy aid' often prove to be the difference between Marines coming home safe or not at all.

While Navy corpsmen are usually attached to every unit that goes on a patrol, convoy or raid, sometimes it's those few precious moments before the corpsmen can make it to the injured Marine that will make the difference. To help Marines understand the importance of these skills and to show them the basics of the new Individual First Aid Kit, two corpsmen from 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment's battalion aid station recently conducted a class on the IFAK and the new tourniquet system being given to Marines deployed to Iraq.

"These classes are pretty important for every person deployed," said Seaman Apprentice Jeremy Trythall, a hospital-man apprentice here. "We are trying to show everyone exactly how to use their IFAK, just in case something happens."

The class took place in the Camp Hurricane Point chow hall, a camp on the outskirts of Ar Ramadi. The class was informal, and provided plenty of opportunities for the members of the class to ask questions.

"They asked a lot about the quick clot agent included in the IFAK," Trythall said. "They were also interested in the new tourniquet that is



AR RAMADI, Iraq - Seaman Apprentice Jeremy Trythall, a hospital-man apprentice here, explains the uses of the iodine found in Marines Individual First-Aid Kits during a class at the Hurricane Point chow hall. The class, which was a refresher course for most of the Marines in attendance, was informal and included instruction on the new tourniquet system being handed out to Marines.

being handed out to the Marines here. Overall, I would say the class went very well."

The class started off reviewing basic first aid skills, then emphasized the importance of applying proper first aid skills in a combat environment. Being able to save fellow Marines during combat is just as important as being able to fight and shoot, said the 23-year-old from Raymondville, Mo.

The Marines in the class, a mix from Headquarters and Service Company and Company K, all seemed to come away with a little more confidence in their ability to perform first aid under pressure.

"The class was good for the Marines here, I think," said Lance Cpl. Micah Garza, a cook currently assigned to the guard force here. "I know I feel more confident in the IFAK and what to do with it."

Classes like these will be given periodically throughout 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine's deployment, said Trythall.

"It's important simply because if their buddy is injured and a corpsman isn't close by, they need to know what to do," he said. "Corpsmen aren't always around and with the proper knowledge, Marines will know what to do and won't freeze up."



AR RAMADI, Iraq - Corporal Matthew Laughlin, a guard for 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, practice using a new tourniquet system on fellow guard Lance Cpl. Micah Garza at a class held at the Hurricane Point chow hall.



Long Island City native fills big shoes in Iraq

Story and photo by Sgt. Ryan Scranton

CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, ARAMADI, Iraq – Lance Corporal Jorge T. Villafuerte may be small in stature but he's big on results.

The 19-year-old warehouseman from Long Island City, Queens, NY weighs in at 137 lbs. and stands only five feet four inches tall but he's filling some pretty big shoes making sure that hundreds of Marines here are equipped with the things they need to take the fight to the enemy.

"I may not be out there in the gunfights but I know I'm supporting them and that's what's important," Villafuerte said.

At any given time Villafuerte can be seen sorting through the dozens of large metal storage containers in the hot desert sun. The influx of equipment, hygiene products, uniforms, boots and other items that keep the camps residents flourishing keeps him busy. When someone needs something he's the man they see.

"It's not a hook-up when I get things for people," He said. "If I have something they need I give it to them because that's my job, to help people out."

Villafuerte is relatively new to the Marine Corps having graduated from Long Island City High School in June 2004 before shipping off to recruit training in July of the same year. He's also new to the camp. It's his third month here but his initiative, inquisitive nature and motto of 'closed mouths don't get fed' that has him thriving in the desert heat.

"I've learned a lot from the Marines I work with out here because I ask questions," Villafuerte said. "I refuse to say, 'I don't know' if I don't have an answer I tell them I'll check into it and keep asking around

until I get one."

Despite still being wet behind the ears, Villafuerte is often the Marine that others go to for ideas. Storing, organizing and tracking the equipment vital to military operations such as generators and computer equipment as well as necessities of daily life such as toilet paper, shaving cream and soap that keep the camps residents clean, requires a lot of headwork.

"When we need a good idea we can count on 'V'," said Lance Cpl. Daniel B. Thompson, fellow warehouseman with Headquarters Battalion and close friend of Villafuerte. "It's always a group effort to figure out these things, but 'V' usually has the best ideas."

Villafuerte's resourcefulness stems from his humble beginnings and having to fend for himself. He was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador before immigrating to the United States at age nine to escape the pitfalls of a life growing up in South America. He said if he would have stayed in Ecuador he would have probably grown up, had kids and found myself in a dead-end job going nowhere like many of his friends he left behind.

"My mom stayed in Ecuador and I came to the States to live with my dad so I would have a better future," Villafuerte said. "They all wanted a better life for me and I'm grateful because it worked out."

The transition wasn't easy. Not yet able to speak English, Villafuerte remembers being lost and confused his first day of school, not knowing what lied ahead. The language barrier forced him to take separate classes from his fellow students.

"I remember when I first got to school, they took me into this room



in the back. I didn't know what they were going to do to me so I started crying," Villafuerte said. "I thought I was going to die."

He didn't die, in fact he did just the opposite. He dedicated most of his time to studying English under his step-sister's tutelage. His step-sister, Betsy, was persistent, making him recite his vocabulary lists repeatedly at the breakfast table.

"When people tell me that I speak well and they can barely tell I have an accent I say 'thank you', but all the thanks goes to my sister Betsy."

Villafuerte says he owes a lot to his family for making him the man he is today. He also attributed joining the Marine Corps as one of the keys to

his success and to the new way he lives his life. He said that living here has taught him to live for the moment and to seize every opportunity that comes along.

"I live my life like there may be no tomorrow," Villafuerte said, "I've been on convoys and patrols and know that you never know what tomorrow may bring."

Villafuerte said he knows he is making a difference but acknowledges the fact that he is not the only Marine here who is contributing to the mission.

"I'm just a Marine doing my job. It's no different than what every other Marine is doing on this base." He said.



HIT, Iraq -Petty Officer 3rd Class Aragorn T. Wold, a hospital corpsman from Company I, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines attends to an injured Iraqi soldier after an attack by insurgents who disrupted civilians receiving money from multinational forces damaged a bridge, caused more than 40 WIAs, one KIA for multinational forces and eight civilian casualties.

3/25's Devil Docs save lives in heat of insurgent attack

Story and photo by Cpl. Ken Melton

HIT, Iraq – Petty Officer 3rd Class Aragorn T. Wold's day was just beginning when the corpsman with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, heard screaming and small arms fire.

The corpsman began to rush into action when he heard three blasts followed by a huge explosion that covered them in debris and medical gear.

A few minutes later, 23-year-old Wold and the other hospital corpsmen he had been with found themselves unconscious lying underneath what remained of the company's field aid station.

"I remember waking up when someone stepped on the board that was on top of me," the Greensboro, N.C. native said. "Everyone else slowly began to rise from underneath the pieces of the room and checked to see if any of the other corpsmen were hurt before trying to find other casualties."

"One of my corpsman had established a casualty collection point in the room next to us," said Petty Officer 2nd Class George J. Cleveland, a Conneaut, Ohio, native. "I began

assigning everyone jobs and could hear a huge firefight outside."

Cleveland left his other two sailors to collect casualties and search the debris for usable medical supplies.

As he moved throughout the building, rounds flew past him as the Marines repelled the enemy's attack. Along the way, he found combat lifesavers

(Marines trained in advanced lifesaving techniques) and told them to take their medical supplies and any casualties to the collection.

The 1993 St. Johns High School graduate returned to the collection point and he and other corpsmen began treating the wounded with the few supplies they had. As wounded continued to

come in, an Iraqi soldier came in with urgent news.

"He announced that many people were hurt and they needed help," said Cleveland. "I took another Marine with me and ran under fire into the building the soldier indicated. When we got there, it was a wreck."

The Iraqi Security Forces' building had taken a lot more damage because it was closer to the car bomb and to the buildings from which insurgents were attacking.

Their medical officer and their liaison, an Army Soldier, were among the injured along with civilians who had come to receive settlement payments from Multi-National Forces.

Cleveland began to escort them back to an already crowded collection point. The language barrier along with the heightened emotion of the soldiers made the work for corpsmen, many of whom were injured themselves, extremely difficult.

The "docs" were able to stabilize all the seriously wounded and begin the administrative work that needed to be completed before medevacs could occur. By this time, their adrenaline began to wear off and their injuries began to show.

"I remember going into a room and forgetting what I was there for," said Cleveland, a 2002 Kent State University graduate. "I also noticed that I was limping."

"We kept talking to each other in order to keep each other going and remind each other what we were doing," Wold said. "When we got a chance to sit down we realized that one of us would have to go back to Camp Hit. Cleveland wanted to stay, but I mentioned that he was limping and that settled it."

Cleveland unwillingly left the base in Wold's trusted but weary hands and returned to Camp

Triage - Page 14





KARMA, Iraq — Marines from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, and Iraqi Army soldiers search the shops in Karma Market for anything that shouldn't be there during Operation Free Market, Sept. 7. Approximately one-third of the battalion and numerous Iraqi soldiers were involved in this operation to try and retrieve information and IED materials from the market.

Operation Free Market disrupts insurgent activity

Story and photos by Pfc. Christopher J. Ohmen

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — Iraq after numerous improvised Security Forces and Marines from explosive device attacks in that 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine area. The search included Regiment conducted a sweep of businesses and residences in the the Karma Market during market area. *Operation Free Market*, Sept. 7. "The battalion has been hit with The operation was conducted

Around 10:00 a.m., Marines from the battalion cordoned off the streets around the market ensuring no one left the area and no hostile force outside the market could attack the combined force as they searched. Once the cordon was set, the rest of the troops moved in to secure the rest of the area and started talking to the locals. Groups of Marines and Iraqi

IED's soldiers searched each side of the about 100 market and talked to the owners meters of the shops to let them know they north of were searching the premises for t h e any weapons or materials for mosque making IED's. Each group in the included interpreters to market, communicate easier and a military and we working dog and handler team are trying that could pick up the scent of to find explosives. out if Two and one-half hours after anyone searching in, around and on top k n o w s of the buildings produced a few who is illegal items. doing it," The Marines and Iraqi soldiers said 2nd concluded their search, loaded up L t . their vehicles and headed back to Gabriel A. Camp Fallujah. The information I v e s , they gathered will be analyzed and platoon used in future operations.

commander "The mission achieved what we for 2nd wanted. We demonstrated Platoon, through Marine and Iraqi Army Company patrols that we are concerned about the area and the people living and working there," said Maj. Christopher Dixon, the executive officer for 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines. "Our continued presence and interaction with these people will eventually develop a closer bond and work towards providing greater security. With increased security, the people and local economy will grow, driving insurgents from their midst."

Ward, Ark. native doubles up in Iraq

Story by Lance Cpl. Zachary W. Lester

CAMP KOREAN VILLAGE, Iraq — After re-enlisting into a new job field in the Marine Corps, Cpl. Ebern H. Wiley deployed to Iraq where he found himself not only working as a mechanic but also filling a billet from his old field.

Wiley, light armored vehicle mechanic with Maintenance Platoon, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, works to repair the battalion's LAVs and also plays a part in the base's corrections facility.

As a mechanic, the 26-year-old Marine puts new engines and transmissions in the LAVs and he also runs the parts storage facility that houses all of the parts for the vehicles.

"I make sure all the parts are serialized and in the computer, so they are easy to find. I make sure everyone gets the parts that they need," Wiley stated.

As a corrections Marine in Iraq, the Ward, Arkansas native handles the detainees that are brought to the camp from the surrounding areas.

"I've handled over 300 detainees. I also make sure that my guys are following the rules to keep them out of trouble," Wiley explained. "I also ensure that all the paper work is in order."

He is also responsible for the well-being of the detainees.

"I make sure the detainees are following the rules and regulations that they are supposed to follow, and I make sure that they are kept clean and have food and water," he said.

Wiley switched to a career in mechanics after completing his first enlistment as a corrections Marine.

"I started looking around to see what different jobs I could do,"

Double - Page 15

Trial by fire, incoming Marines come under attack

Story and photos by Cpl. Shane Suzuki

AR RAMADI, Iraq – As part of continuing operations to eliminate the insurgency in Ar Ramadi and to help acquaint the incoming 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment to the neighborhoods they will be responsible for, 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment recently conducted a number of patrols to find both insurgents.

The patrols are part of the normal operations that the Marines of 1st Battalion, 5th Marines have undertaken since arriving in the city more than seven months ago. However, now that 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines is here, the incoming squads and platoon leaders have begun accompanying the battalion's patrols to see how the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines handled objectives such as searching cars, spotting improvised explosive devices and raiding suspected hiding spots of insurgents.

"A lot of insurgents live in this area," said 2nd



AR RAMADI, Iraq– Two Marines stand guard while the rest of 2nd Platoon, 1st Battalion, 7th hunts for the insurgents who attacked their patrol earlier in the day. The patrol was cut short when an improvised explosive device was spotted on the side of the road. Soon after the IED was destroyed, the platoon came under attack.



AR RAMADI, Iraq – Second Lt. Tyler Holt, Platoon Commander, 2nd Platoon, Company A, gives directions to his Marines after finishing a raid on a suspected insurgent base. The raid was one of many operations the battalion conducted to help incoming 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment get used to the area.

Lt. Tyler Holt, Platoon Commander, 2nd Platoon, Company A. "The more we can show the incoming Marines, the better."

Their first mission did exactly that as the Marines raided a suspected home of an insurgent supporter and provided a tour of the Government Center. The second patrol however, would provide experience of a different sort.

While en route through the city, Holt thought he saw an IED on the side of the road. He called in the suspected roadside bomb to the Explosive Ordnance Detachment based at Camp Hurricane Point and directed the platoon to wait at the nearby Government Center.

Soon after EOD confirmed the IED and eliminated the threat, the Government Center came under attack from small arms fire. A firefight lasting approximately 10 minutes began between the Marines providing security for the Government Center and the insurgents.

"When the firefight died down, we pursued the attackers but were unable to find them," explained the Chicago native. "However, while in pursuit, units again came under fire. Once again, the enemy retreated and we pursued."

While the Marines did not capture the insurgents who attacked them, Holt still considered the pursuit a

success.

"We taught the enemy that it's going to take more than cowardly attacks to intimidate us," the 24-year-old explained. "They learned that we are going to respond with overwhelming force and that we are going to win."

Lance Cpl. Chase Newland, a rifleman for 2nd Squad and Bellefourche, S.D. native, agreed with Holt and considered the missions both successes.

"I suppose it would have been better if we had found what we were looking for, but we all made it back safely, which is most important," said the Bellefourche High School graduate. While we've been here, we have taken a lot of bad people off the street and have taught them a lesson."

Fire - Page 14



San Francisco native keeps Marines talking

Story and photos by Sgt. Ryan S. Scranton



CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, RAMADI, Iraq—Corporal Jessica L. Curtis knows the roads here like the back of her hand.

The 21-year-old San Francisco native should. She travels them daily in convoys taking supplies back and forth through the western region of Iraq several times per week.

Curtis said she's been on more than 100 convoys since she got here seven months ago. As the communications chief for Truck Company, Headquarters Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, she is responsible for ensuring the Marines driving in the convoys can talk to each other and coordinate their movements. Traveling the various improved and unimproved roads presents a challenge for Marines maneuvering their vehicles through traffic. Vehicles strung out across long stretches of highway and along city streets provide an easy target for insurgents. The vulnerability of convoys makes synchronizing their movements vital to the safety of the Marines.

"People don't understand how important [communications] are out here," Curtis said. "No one thinks about it until they don't have it. Then it sinks in."

Curtis also maintains the systems that block and prevent the detonation of roadside Improvised Explosive Devices. She's logged more than 6000 miles on the roads and said she never feels unsafe. She finds solace in the fact that her fellow Marines are providing security on each convoy. She's encountered numerous IED's while on the road, but said that each convoy's security element has always identified them.

"We always catch it before anything happens," Curtis said. "We're either really good or we're lucky." Curtis said if it's the latter, she isn't worried about her luck running out. Her confidence in her fellow

Marines ability to handle any situation keeps her calm and collected on the road.

"Everyone out here works together," Curtis said. "I know if anything happens I'll be okay because everyone knows how to react and they'll all do their jobs. So I'm not worried when I'm out there. I'm not complacent. I just have faith in my security team and the people I work with."

The Marines in her unit form a tight-knit group. They rely on each other for support and work together as a team. She acknowledges the importance of her job but said she also realizes the role she plays is just one part of a larger effort.

"I feel like I'm doing something for the team here," Curtis said. "We all work together to get things done. [Truck Company] does a lot of background work. If the power goes out, it's because we didn't refuel the generators. If people don't get their repair parts, it's because we didn't pick them up. We have a pretty important role here."

Curtis said what is truly important to her is not what she does, but what she is a part of. She wanted to be a Marine since she was 14-years-old. She attended an all girls catholic school in the Visitation Valley area of San Francisco. Mercy High School was a far cry from the Marines, but she said she has always wanted to do something different.

"Ninety percent of the girls I went to high school with graduated and went to college," Curtis said. "I wanted to do something adventurous; I guess it was because I watched too much Discovery Channel."

Curtis's need for adventure keeps her on the road. She said it's the same reason she plans to make a career of the Marines.

"I've had good days and I've had bad days, but there have been a lot

Trading Spaces, Identical twins cross paths in Iraq

Story and photo by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

CAMP HIT, Iraq - Being born a twin is an uncommon occurrence, but an even more unusual occasion is when two identical twins get a chance to hold a reunion on the sandy terrain of Iraq.

Corporal Jason P. Abell and 1st Lt. Bryan J. Abell, of Demassess, Md., crossed paths as one returns to Iraq and the other leaves the hot desert.

First Lieutenant Abell, the Scout Sniper Platoon commander for 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, and the rest of his unit arrived in Iraq recently to replace his brother's active-reserve unit, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, who operated in the area for the last seven months.

"Once I found out we were replacing 3/25, I e-mailed him and let him know I would be coming out there," said 1st Lt. Abell. "It was actually pretty nice to hear because we haven't seen each other since September 2004."

Just as the identical twins have been confusing people for years, once in the same area as each other, Marines with both units became confused. Many of them, not knowing the Abells were twins, mistook one for the other.

"I've been called sir by people walking by me about 20 times since he got here," commented Cpl. Abell.

"And I've had Marines with 3/25 come up to me confused at how I became a lieutenant thinking I was him," added 1st Lt. Abell pointing at his brother.

Before their Iraqi reunion, both brothers joined the Marine Corps a few years after graduating from Demassess High School in 1998. Corporal Abell enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve in 2000 while attending Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio while his twin attended the U.S. Naval Academy.



Both were very interested in the Marine Corps in high school but also knew college had to be a part of their lives. Therefore, Cpl. Abell joined the reserves for a change of pace while going to college and 1st Lt. Abell joined the academy to get the best of both worlds, college and the Marine Corps.

"I finished my degree at the Naval Academy and got commissioned in the Marines right after graduating," said 1st Lt. Abell. "It was a great way for me to get my degree and join the military at the same time."

As Cpl. Abell leaves Iraq to go back to Columbus, Ohio to continue his work as a graphic designer and freelance illustrator, 1st Lt.

Abell looks forward to the next seven months where he will support *Operation Iraq Freedom* for the second time since joining his unit a year ago. Knowing what to expect the second time around has made the deployment easier for 1st Lt. Abell, but he never expected to see his brother here.

"It is definitely something you don't expect to see, a family member in a place like Iraq," said 1st Lt. Abell. "It just goes to show how it sure is a small Corps."

Ohio Marine worked to build better Iraq

Story and photos by Cpl. Mike Escobar

FALLUJAH, Iraq – During the past six months, Lance Cpl. Chris Graves' world has revolved around patrolling the city streets and carrying out late night raids here. Today, however, the Iraqi air is filled with an almost tangible feeling of excitement for him. More than 180 days after arriving here, he and his teammates from Company C, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment are gearing up to leave their makeshift base and head home. As they do, Graves and fellow Marines from 4th Platoon look back at their accomplishments with pride.

"I remember seeing the ruined city streets and collapsed buildings when I got here," stated the 20-year-old infantryman from Wakeman, Ohio. "As the months have gone by, we've seen people rebuilding their homes and businesses, bringing in new life to this area."

Graves, a 2003 Western Reserve High School graduate, said that by constant patrolling alongside Iraqi Security Forces, the Marines have afforded Northern Fallujah's people a secure environment in which to rebuild a community still healing from the scars of last year's conflict. However, he added that Company C's work here is not done.

On Sept. 15, ISF soldiers and Company C Marines conducted Operation Hard Knock, a house-to-house search mission within a city sector previously wired off by other battalion personnel. This is the tenth operation of its kind military forces here have conducted.

During Hard Knock, the joint personnel detained three suspected insurgent supporters and confiscated one hand grenade. Possessing explosives in Fallujah is currently illegal for security reasons.

The ISF forces worked in conjunction with the Marines, but also searched a sector of their own to the south. Graves said that much like today's mission, Iraqi troops have been operating much more independently of U.S. forces for several months now.

"Now that our time in country is coming to an end, I can definitely say I've seen stronger ISF presence than when we first got here," he continued. "At first, there would only be a few Iraqi soldiers patrolling with one of our squads. Now, they do their own patrols, or at most, we'll have a team of three or four Marines walking with them."

First Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment personnel have placed great emphasis on helping train the local forces to this present state of proficiency, offering them urban warfare skills, medical and convoy operations training, as well as constant "on the job" training. Though this is an ongoing task, Graves said he sees the ISF nearing the day when they will take over the nation's security affairs.

"They've learned a lot during their time with us," he stated. "The town seems to like them even more than us now."

Notable also among the progress Graves sees is the increasing number of people now populating the formerly desolate city. In May, Company C vacated their old base of operations in an apartment complex in Northwestern Fallujah, enabling Iraqi citizens to move back into the housing they had left during last year's conflict.

Graves and the ISF will continue working hand-in-hand while he and his fellow Marines eagerly wait to head home.

"It's strange, but on patrol, my level of enthusiasm and awareness has



remained pretty much the same as when I first got here. Now is not the time to get complacent, because we all want to make it home safely," Graves stated. "I'll leave here knowing that we helped keep Fallujah safe and did things the best we could. Not a lot of people can say they got this same chance."

Teufelhunden Battalion takes reins from the Betio Bastards

Story and photos by
Sgt. Jerad W. Alexander

CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq—The Camp Lejeune-based 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division took control of the Al Qa'im area of operations in Western Iraq during a turnover ceremony here Sept. 10, 2005.

The 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines, known as the Teufelhunden Battalion, takes control from the Betio Bastards of the Camp Lejeune-based 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division who spent the past seven months operating primarily in the Al Qa'im area, conducting various operations to include Operations Matador, Spear and Quick Strike.

"The 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines have been successful here. This place had no existing Iraqi security element," said Marlow, Okla., native Maj. Toby D. Patterson, executive officer, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines.



AL QA'IM, Iraq - Eatonton, Ga., native Sgt. Kevin L. Batchelor, platoon guide, stands watch during a cordon and knock mission conducted at a local cement factory.



CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq - Two CH-53 Super Stallion's lift off the landing strip here after dropping off Marines and materials of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. The Camp Lejeune-based rifle battalion arrived to replace the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment.

One of the missions of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines in the Al Qa'im area of operations will be to build up and support the fledgling Iraqi Army, according to Patterson.

"We want to be able to give the Iraqi Army a chance to get in place and legitimize them as a force," said Patterson.

Patterson also stated the Marines of the Teufelhunden Battalion will be in place here to support the upcoming Iraqi national elections as well.

During the turnover, the Marines of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines showed the Marines of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines how they conducted

business while 'outside the wire' of Camp Al Qa'im.

During one such mission, the Marines of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines conducted a cordon and knock mission of a local cement factory just a few kilometers from the camp.

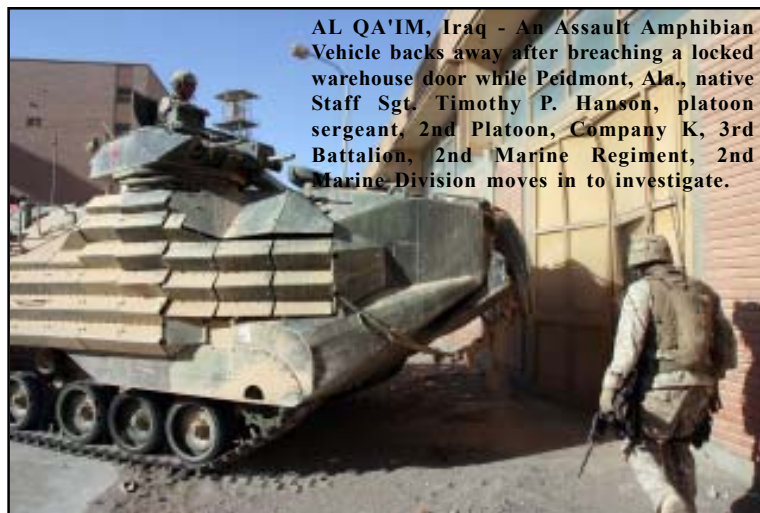
"The [mission] was to maintain a presence. Basically, it served as a security patrol," said Piedmont, Ala., native Staff Sgt. Timothy P. Hanson, platoon sergeant, 2nd Platoon,

Company K.

"It's good to see a unit coming in that has a lot of experience," said Hanson, referring to their relief's recent deployment to Afghanistan. "They're going to hit it hard and get results."

According to Patterson, the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines made great strides in providing security to the Al Qa'im region.

"We'll follow in their steps to make it a safer part of Iraq," he said.



AL QA'IM, Iraq - An Assault Amphibian Vehicle backs away after breaching a locked warehouse door while Piedmont, Ala., native Staff Sgt. Timothy P. Hanson, platoon sergeant, 2nd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division moves in to investigate.

Company I finds IED materials at hotel in Hit

Story by Cpl Ken Melton

HIT, Iraq – After weeks of monitoring an area surrounding a hotel littered with improvised explosive devices, Sgt. Eugene F. O'Connor, 27, the platoon commander for 2nd Platoon, decided to investigate the building.

Two of his squads began to question people in the area, gaining information which led to the search of the building and discovery of ammunition. The discovery prompted them to search even deeper, eventually leading them to the hotel's storage area.

When the owner became uncooperative, O'Connor's suspicions were confirmed and his squad began to search further. Behind a series of doors they discovered a huge amount IED materials and propaganda.

"The question was not what we found, but what we didn't," the Silvercreek, N.Y., native and 1997 Silvercreek High School graduate said smiling.

They found various types of ammunition, explosives, maps, grids, GPS systems, AK-47s, fake license plates, communication devices, binoculars, and black hooded masks. They also discovered some of the key materials for making car bombs.

"I was there when they first opened the door and we were all amazed," said Sgt. John D. Hanni, a squad leader with 2nd platoon and Providence, R.I. native. "We had already searched the living area and didn't find anything so we thought we might go home

empty handed. We were wrong."

They cordoned off the area and decided to search the city council building where they found more ammunition, propaganda and photos of insurgents.

While this was not enough evidence to detain anyone in the building, they did detain the hotel owner.

"I felt bad we didn't catch the renters of the storage spaces," said O'Connor, a 2000 Alfred State College and 2003 University of Phoenix graduate. "I'm glad to have found these items though. I knew this place was somehow connected with the IEDs in the area. Now they have one less place to store their weapons."



Triage:

Hit for medical treatment. Wold would leave on the next convoy, but until then, he assisted the Marines in reconstructing the FAS and the rest of the base.

Cleveland and Wold returned the next day to find it in even better shape and more medically stocked than before the attack.

"This was one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life," said 30-year-old Cleveland. "But I would do it again if my brothers in the service ever needed me."

"I am so proud to be with these guys," Wold said. "They did their job of fighting the enemy and then worked tirelessly to repair any damage to their home."

"We also did an awesome job working hurt and under fire to take care of them. I'll never forget it."



Fire:

All in all, in spite of the attacks, the missions had gone well, said Holt. The main objective was to go through the city, search for the enemy and teach 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines the lessons they had learned over the seven months they had spent in the area.

"We've shown them some of the teachings we've learned through trial and error," said Holt. "I consider that a success."



Friends:

After Fitzgerald finished his rugby tour, he planned to attend college in New Mexico on a rugby scholarship, but due to the timing of when he got back from the tour and a rough financial situation, he wasn't able to go.

Instead he decided to join the Marine Corps. So he went down to the local recruiting office on August 25, the same day Hart arrived at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego.

"I signed up that day and I was supposed to go to boot camp in October. But someone else who was going the next day was disqualified for some reason and I decided to take his place instead. I ended up in Hart's boot camp company," Fitzgerald said.

"I had no idea that 'Fitz' had joined, let alone came to boot camp the same time I did," Hart said. "I thought he was off at college in New Mexico, until the second day of boot camp."

On the second day of boot camp, the recruits of Fitzgerald and Hart's company were in formation to conduct one of their first morning physical training sessions.

"I was looking around for Nate the whole time because I knew he was somewhere in that company," Fitzgerald said. "Once I found him, I just stared at him, because we weren't aloud to talk to any other recruit."

"I was kind of glancing around the company and I just happened to look in his direction. 'And when I saw him, I was just shocked and excited to see him there,'" Hart said. Throughout their three month

training evolution, Hart and Fitzgerald communicated through letters in the mail because they couldn't talk to one another due to the intense training cycle.

After they graduated recruit training, the new Marines went to Marine Combat Training together for a month — again ending up in the same company. Toward the end, the two found out the jobs they would have during the rest of their four-year enlistment.

Hart joined to be a field radio operator and found out at MCT that he got his wish. Fitzgerald joined on an open contract, so based on the needs of the Marine Corps, he was given a job at random that fit his qualifications.

"I found out I was going to be a field radio operator too," Fitzgerald explained. "Out of all the military occupational specialties in the world they gave me the same one as Hart; unbelievable!"

So the two Windlake natives went to communications school together and this time ended up in the same class and platoon. At the end of their school, the Marines had their pick of their first duty stations. With four open spots at 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment at Camp Lejeune, N.C., the two naturally picked the same unit.

"We both wanted to go to an infantry battalion, because that's where we knew things happened," Hart said. "So we talked about it and picked 3/2."

On March 25, 2004, Hart and Fitzgerald checked in to 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines in the battalion's communications platoon. The two often traveled

home together during their leave time and four-day weekends. And they found themselves becoming better friends because of the Marine Corps.

"This guy is like a brother to me now," Fitzgerald said. "In high school we didn't really hang out that much because of our grade level difference, but now we have definitely become good friends." Later on that year, Hart was selected for the battalion's security platoon, but it wouldn't be the last time the two "brothers" were together. During a Headquarters and Service Company training evolution, Hart, Fitzgerald and two other Marines were on the same team for an exercise.

"The exercise was a team effort to climb a one story building in under two minutes," Hart said. "Our team was the fastest so they had us demonstrate for the whole company."

Both Hart and Fitzgerald were pulling up one of their teammates when Hart took the Marine's rifle and slung it on his back to help him up.

"At this point, as we were pulling him up, the rifle on Hart's back swung around and smacked me right in the face," said Fitzgerald. "Fitz let go, fell back, and I was stuck there pulling our teammate by myself right there in front of the whole company. It was just another one of those crazy moments that we found ourselves in," Hart said.

Those crazy moments continued up until the two Marines found themselves in their first deployment together at Camp Gannon in Husaybah, Iraq fighting off

insurgents.

"I wasn't thinking it at the time, but later I thought, 'Wow, who would have thought that two Wisconsin boys from the same small town and same high school would be in Iraq together in a firefight,'" Fitzgerald said.

While Fitzgerald stayed at Camp Gannon until August, Hart joined with 3rd Platoon, Company K as their radio operator, participating in various operations throughout their area of responsibility.

Now as the two Marines prepare to return home after their seven-month deployment, their minds are set on what will be waiting for them when they return.

"Our parents are throwing us a party when we get home together," Fitzgerald said.

"They've been communicating with each other while we have been gone and developed sort of a support network," Hart said.

The two discussed the proximity of their lives back home and realized that they were closer than they thought.

My fiancée, Krista, lives two houses down from Hart and I live about two minutes away from him and here we are in Iraq together, having spent our two years in the Marine Corps together," Fitzgerald said.

Hart and Fitzgerald both agreed that the way they ended up together in the Marine Corps was "completely crazy," but now they are close friends.

"It has made time go by a lot quicker and has made life a lot easier than it would have been without him," Hart said pointing to Fitzgerald.

Double:

he said. "Most of my jobs before I joined the military had something to do with mechanics. I decided to work on LAVs." The Cabot High School graduate was a diesel mechanic before joining the Marine Corps and was used to doing small engine repairs.

"It was a lot different. I had to get a lot more in-depth into the engine. Doing this allowed me to get more experience in something

that I was always curious about," he stated.

Even though Wiley is working in two jobs during his first deployment to Iraq, he feels he is making more a difference here than he did back in States.

"Working out here is completely different than back home," Wiley explained. "Back there you are watching over other military members that have done something wrong. Out here you feel like you are doing more and making a difference." Wiley said.

A 'dog day' afternoon in Al Qa'im.



Story and Photos by Sgt. Jerrod M. Glass

CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq—One of the common aspects of operations in the Al Qa'im area of responsibility is the routine discovery of hidden weapons caches, mines, explosives and even insurgents. Helping with that search is a pair of unique Marines, unlike any others. "Sometimes it's like our dogs are here for a [morale, welfare and recreation] purpose," said Phoenix native, Sgt. Jerrod M. Glass, military police working dog handler, 2nd Military Police Battalion, Regimental Combat Team – 2. "People like to pet them. I think it reminds them of home"

The dogs aboard Camp Al Qa'im, Spike and Ali, however, are not here for the morale of the troops. Their job consists of sniffing out bombs, improvised explosive devices and

weapons caches. "We go out on all kinds of missions; raids, vehicle check points, cordon and knock missions," said Glass. "We guard detainees, we do it all." Glass is the handler for Spike, a three-year-old, 70-pound Belgian Malinois who is very aggressive for his size, said Glass. "We call him 'Son of Satan'," said Philadelphia native, Cpl. Jeffrey S. Beck, Glass' fellow military police working-dog handler, referring to Spike's aggressive personality. Beck, 20, is the handler for Ali, a four-year-old, 110-pound German Shepherd whom he lovingly refers to as 'The Gentle Giant' for his calm demeanor. "He lets people come up and pet him," said Beck. On missions, however, the dogs

provide a good mental deterrent, said Glass.

"It's a big deal around here for people to see dogs like this," he added, referring to the local Iraqis. "Just having the dogs present, they know not to mess around."

Both dogs came with their handlers from their home base of Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif. While in Iraq, however, they support the 2nd Military Police Battalion. Handlers are always with their dogs, no matter where they may deploy or for how long, said Glass.

Becoming a working dog handler is something held in high regard among military policemen, he said. "You get picked out of [military police] school. It's challenging and a more advanced thing than regular police work," he explained.

According to Beck, he was asked to be a dog handler because he was the honor graduate at military police school in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. There are approximately 200 handlers in the Marine Corps.

The dogs are used as military police working dogs until they reach the age of nine or 10. After which, the dogs are considered eligible for retirement.

Dogs that are unable to maintain their effectiveness are let go. Dogs with passive personality traits can be adopted by their former owner, while the more aggressive dogs are generally put to sleep.

One of the primary responsibilities

of being a dog handler is maintaining the health of the dogs.

"We go over them each day, making sure they're healthy," said Glass. "We look them over, give them baths and brush them. All handlers are taught first-aid for dogs so we can give them a splint or whatever they need."

The dogs drive themselves hard on missions, according to Glass. The handlers monitor them to make sure they don't over do themselves and make sure they get enough water, especially out in a desert environment.

Both Spike and Ali are generally fed with regular dog food, similar to what is bought at grocery stores. However, the dogs sometimes get fed a little extra.

"During a mission [Ali] wouldn't eat his normal food and I was getting worried, so I cut up an [Meal, Ready to Eat] and fed it to him. He ate it up," said Beck. "For a while I would mix food from an MRE like a grilled chicken breast with his food and he'd eat it up."

Both Glass and Beck also receive care packages from concerned individuals in the United States, most of which is filled with food and treats for the dogs.

However, everything within the Camp Al Qa'im military working dog section isn't positive.

"Spike and Ali don't get along," said Glass. "They're both alpha-males so they are always competing for

Dog - Page 17



6th CAG takes over civil affairs mission in Iraq

Story by Capt. Juliet R. Chelkowski

CAMPBLUE DIAMOND, AR RAMADI, Iraq — After several months of preparation in the U.S. and weeks of on-the-job-training here, the 6th Civil Affairs Group took the reigns from the 5th CAG today to continue working towards a secure, self-governing Iraq.

Comprised of mostly Marine and Navy reservists, the 6th CAG will support 2nd Marine Division's work with the people and government of Al Anbar Province during the next several months of historic "firsts" for the country. As Iraq moves forward to two crucial elections in the next three months, 6th CAG will play a key role in the country's transition to an independent, self-sustaining country.

"There's a lot of change ongoing in the region," the commanding officer of 6th CAG, Col. Paul Brier, said. "But Coalition Forces are here to provide a level of stability, offer guidance and provide tools that will help the Al Anbar people get to a point where they no longer need us." The role of civil affairs in Iraq has changed dramatically since the beginning of Operation

Iraqi Freedom in 2003. Throughout most of OIF — like traditional civil-military operations — the responsibility and authority over a project resided with the military unit conducting the



Photo by Sgt. Ryan S. Scranton

contracting.

Now, with the goal of Iraqi self-governance, the civil affairs mission is focused on facilitating the Iraqi governments' involvement and role in providing sustained services to their people. The mission, Brier said, has transitioned from

"doing for the Iraqi people" to helping them "do for themselves."

To accomplish this, the unit will tap into the diverse skill set and knowledge the civil affairs Marines and Sailors bring from their civilian jobs and their Marine Corps experiences to provide guidance in civil administration, economic development, education, infrastructure restoration, and reconstruction.

The 6th CAG formed from units across the United States, includes engineers, teachers, lawyers, mechanics, a state-elected official, nurses, a cardiologist, students, a pharmacist, electricians, a plumber, business managers, construction workers, a psychologist, accountants, stock brokers, a farmer, police officers, fire fighters and active duty Marines.

As the only two provisional civil affairs units in the Marine Corps activated specifically to support OIF, both 6th and 5th CAG will be permanently deactivated upon completion of their deployment.

Fist:

aircraft West of Sa'dah. Four of the insurgents were killed and the remaining three fled into a nearby building.

The building contained an estimated nine additional fighters. When the insurgents began firing on Marines, aviation assets were again called in and dropped six precision-guided bombs on the building. Nineteen enemy were killed in the strike.

At approximately 3:00 p.m., Marines observed a suicide car bomber prematurely detonate his vehicle approximately 200 meters from their position. Shortly thereafter near Karabilah, Marines were also engaged by rocket propelled grenades and small-arms fire from a building. Marines returned fire with 81 mm mortars. Eight al Qaeda in Iraq members were killed and multiple secondary explosions were seen coming from the building.

On the third day of Kabda Bil Hadid, Marines discovered a bomb in a home east of Karabilah. The bomb detonated as explosive ordnance specialists were approaching the house to dismantle it. No Marines were injured in the explosion.

Northeast of Sa'dah at 11:15 a.m., U.S. forces discovered a weapons cache consisting of ten 82 mm mortar rounds and two 82 mm mortar

tubes. The cache site was subsequently destroyed.

At noon, U.S. forces killed two al Qaeda in Iraq insurgents north of Karabilah with 81 mm mortar fire. The pair was observed planting a roadside bomb. The bomb was later destroyed by explosive ordnance specialists.

Overall, Marine casualties were reported as light. The offensive is part of an overall operation called Sayaid (Hunter), which is intended to deny Al Qaeda in Iraq the ability to operate freely in the Euphrates River Valley and to prevent the terrorists from influencing the local population through murder and intimidation.

Insurgency Deterrent!!

Dog:

top dog. We have to keep them separated."

Despite Spike and Ali's general dislike for one another, the bond between the handler and his dog is remarkable.

"I can't see myself ever leaving him," said Beck, referring to Ali.

